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Reading

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Reading

Some of our reading encourages and supports us in living according to our most deeply held values, especially when those values seem of no significance in the culture surrounding us, or are cheapened in some of the popular programming and publications that are prevalent. How and where do we find and use the sources and resources that meet the needs of both our minds and our hearts?

We read for knowledge, for recreation, and perhaps for help with some practical aspects of life. These purposes are related to our minds and hearts. But some resources touch us more deeply than others, just as music and art of all kinds, as well as beauty in nature, affect us differently when we experience them rather than only learn about them.

For example, I enjoy reading about galaxies, black holes and other phenomena in the skies. At a more profound level, complementing what I have learned about the stars, I also enjoy reading "between the lines," thinking about a creator providing for us the celestial objects so that we might notice, examine, and seek to understand them. In addition, some recent books and articles about the complementary roles that science and faith have in satisfying the desires and needs of both mind and heart are of much interest to me.

All of us have at least two ways of reading, sometimes simultaneously: we can take in what is presented as new knowledge or appreciation, as in reading about the migration of Monarch butterflies, or reading a novel about human interactions, and we can also read with reflective awareness so that we notice the effects upon us of what we are reading, and make continual choices as to what to keep as ours and what to reject as not befitting us. No matter what we read, we make our own judgments about the contents, and learn that some resources meet our present needs far better than others.

Finding the reading material that best suits us begins with a kind of appetite: a desire for not only knowing more, but for finding guidance, encouragement, and support for a life of meaning, purpose, and value. Our desires will guide us in recognizing and choosing the most suitable writings. Though we most likely cannot accurately describe what we want or need, our inner senses will alert us when anything - from a theological work to a novel - attracts us, and somehow harmonizes with our openness to growth, or perhaps initiates a process of healing.

We can be on the lookout for some book, article, or other printed media that will, at any time, catch our attention. A friend can name a book, for

example, and we find that we are interested, and decide to see for ourselves whether or not there is something there for us. Sometimes we find an attraction for Scripture when there was none earlier. Or we might recognize the name of an author, and notice that we want to read more of his or her writings. We might browse a magazine, catalog, or store that will more likely contain something we need rather than looking through the shelves of supermarkets. We might even discover that we have exactly what we want already in our home, where it has been for years, before matching our ever-changing needs.

While those who know us well might be able to recommend something for us to read, we have another, more certain "personal advisor" whom we can consult at any time: We can ask the Spirit of God to provide guidance for us in selecting a resource, and for openness to the thoughts and choices that will most closely meet our present needs.